

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1494

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FOR STATE AND AID/W

DEPT ACTION FOR NEA/ARN AND CU/NEA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SEDU, LE

SUBJECT: AID GRANTEES AT AUB AND SURVIVAL OF AUB

REF: (A) STATE 192301, (B) STATE 194858

1. SUMMARY: AUB IS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE AS LONG AS SECURITY SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT PERMITS, AND HAS ANNOUNCED REGISTRATION FOR FALL SEMESTER. LOSS OF AID GRANTEE STUDENTS WILL EXACERBATE ALREADY STRINGENT FINANCIAL SITUATION UNLESS USG COMES UP WITH OFFSETTING ASSISTANCE, PROVISION OF TRANSCRIPTS FOR TRANSFEREES

SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM. EMBASSY URGES THAT USG FIND OTHER WAYS TO CONTINUE VITAL SUPPORT FOR AUB, INCLUDING FUNDING FOR LEBANESE GRANTEES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFFS DISCUSSED REFTELS A AND B WITH DR. SAMIR THABET, ACTING PRESIDENT AUB (UNTIL RETURN OF DR. CRAIG LICHTENWALNER) ON AUG.9. AUB OF COURSE UNDERSTANDS RATIONALE BEHIND AID DECISION TO SEEK ALTERNATIVE PLACEMENT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS FROM AID PROGRAM COUNTRIES, BUT BELIEVES CONTINUED
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USE OF AUB SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT. AUB IS DETERMINED

CONTINUE IN OPERATION UNLESS AND UNTIL SECURITY SITUATION MAKES THIS IMPOSSIBLE. AUB BOARD CHAIRMAN PLIMPTON VISITED CAMPUS AUG 9 TO REASSURE FACULTY OF TRUSTEE SUPPORT. REGISTRATION FOR FALL SEMESTER HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED FOR OCT 11-17 WITH CLASSES TO BEGIN OCT 18. ABOUT 2,000 STUDENTS ARE NOW ATTENDING CLASSES AT AUB, AND UNIVERSITY INTENDS TO OFFER SAME PROGRAMS IN BOTH GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE DIVISIONS AS LAST YEAR (ALTHOUGH SOME INDIVIDUAL COURSES MAY BE CUT).

3. AUB HAS TAKEN STEPS ON ITS OWN TO CONFRONT ITS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS: TUITION IS BEING RAISED, AND FUNDS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED TO SCHOLARSHIPS WILL HENCEFORTH BE APPLIED TO STUDENT LOANS INSTEAD. HOWEVER, REDUCTIONS IN AUB GRANT AGREEMENT DUE TO TRANSFER OF AID GRANTEES ELSEWHERE WILL BE SEVERE FINANCIAL BLOW IN WAKE OF OVERALL LOSS OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT. DR. THABET ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE FAR CHEAPER FOR USG TO SEND AID-FINANCED STUDENTS TO AUB THAN TO U.S. UNIVERSITIES.

4. IN LIGHT OF THESE FACTORS, TOCHVSY RECOMMENDS THAT AID/W:

(A) CONTINUE TO EXPLORE EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITIES AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES FOR AID-SPONSORED STUDENTS WHO WERE ATTENDING OR WERE PLANNING TO ATTEND AUB.

(B) MAKE CLEAR TO THESE STUDENTS, USAID'S AND HOST COUNTRIES THAT AUB NOW INTENDS TO START FALL SEMESTER IN OCTOBER, 1976, UNLESS THERE IS DRASTIC DETERIORATION OF SECURITY SITUATION.

(C) GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES OF PLACING THESE STUDENTS ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT MANY OF THOSE WHO FORMERLY ATTENDED AUB MAY WISH TO RETURN, KEEP OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR PLACEMENT IN AUB.

5. IF THE SECURITY SITUATION PERMITS (AND WE FULLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECOGNIZE THAT THIS IS A BIG "IF") WE SUBMIT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR STUDENTS, FOR AUB AND FOR USG IF THEY RETURN TO AUB.

6. TRANSCRIPTS FOR THOSE WISHING TO TRANSFER ARE NO PROBLEM (REFTEL A, PARA 8). AS AID/W OR POSTS WITH GRANTEE STUDENTS REPORT NAMES OF POSSIBLE TRANSFEREES TO U.S. OR THIRD COUNTRY SCHOOLS, AUB

WILL PREPARE COPIES OF TRANSCRIPTS AND EMBASSY WILL POUCH VIA DAMASCUS FOR PROMPT TRANSMISSION TO AID/W AND USAID'S. EMBASSY EXPECTS IN COMING MONTHS BE ABLE TO SEND OUT UNCLASSIFIED POUCH TO DAMASCUS APPROXIMATELY ONCE EACH WEEK.

7. WE ARE NOT CLEAR ON MEANING OF PARA 3, REFTEL A, AS MODIFIED BY REFTEL B, REGARDING LEBANESE PARTICIPANTS. WE TRUST THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE STUDENTS WILL BE TERMINATED. DECISION TO CONTINUE NUMBER OF LEBANESE AS AID GRANTEES, EVEN AFTER LEBANON CEASED TO BE AN AID PROGRAM COUNTRY IN 1962, WAS BASED ON RECOGNITION THAT IT WAS POLITICALLY DESIRABLE TO HAVE SOME AID GRANTEES FROM AUB HOME COUNTRY. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN LEBANON, IT EVEN MORE POLITICALLY COMPELLING TO CONTINUE THIS PROGRAM. WE WOULD NOT WANT TO GIVE IMPRESSION THAT USG IS INTERESTED IN AUB ONLY AS AN INSTITUTION FOR TRAINING NON-LEBANESE STUDENTS. WE BELIEVE IT LIKELY THAT MOST LEBANESE GRANTEES WILL WANT TO CONTINUE STUDIES HERE AS LONG AS UNIVERSITY IS FUNCTIONING.

8. REFTELS RAISE QUESTION OF OVERALL USG SUPPORT FOR AUB AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME. BOTH AUB AND EMBASSY FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT IN FAIRNESS TO PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AND TO STUDENTS THEMSELVES, ALTERNATIVES MUST BE EXPLORED IN CASE AUB IS UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE EDUCATION THEY NEED. AT SAME TIME, EMBASSY BELIEVES AUB IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT SYMBOL OF U.S. INTEREST, NOT ONLY IN LEBANON BUT IN MIDDLE EAST AS A WHOLE, AND THAT USG SHOULD DO WHAT IT CAN TO ASSURE THAT UNIVERSITY REMAINS ALIVE AND WELL. WE UNDERSTAND AID HAS ALREADY PROVIDED AUB WITH \$1.5 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MILLION OF HOPED FOR \$6 MILLION SPECIAL GRANT FOR '76-77. THIS TRANCHE IS ESSENTIAL TO GET UNIVERSITY STARTED IN OCTOBER AND THE REMAINDER WILL BE NEEDED FOR THE UNIVERSITY TO KEEP GOING THE REST OF THE YEAR. IN VIEW OF ALMOST CERTAIN DECREASE IN AMOUNT PROVIDED UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT FOR TRAINING OF THIRD-COUNTRY STUDENTS, AUB WILL PROBABLY NEED ADDITIONAL HELP TO BALANCE ITS BUDGET IN '76-77. ONE WAY TO PROVIDE THIS HELP WOULD BE TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT PER STUDENT PAID BY AID TO AUB. (AUB TELLS US THE PRESENT FIGURE IS CONSIDERABLY BELOW THE ACTUAL COSTS.) IN ANY CASE, EMBASSY HOPES DEPT AND AID/W WILL GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO WAYS IN WHICH USG AND PERHAPS PRIVATE DONORS CAN ASSIST THIS IMPORTANT INSTITUTION THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD.

HUNT

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